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(54) Title: SOYA EXTRACT, PROCESS FOR ITS PREPARATION AND PHARMACEUTICAL COMPOSITION

(57) Abstract

A description is given of novel soya extracts having a defined ratio of soya saponins to glucoside isoflavones; processes for their production; and pharmaceutical compositions containing these extracts.

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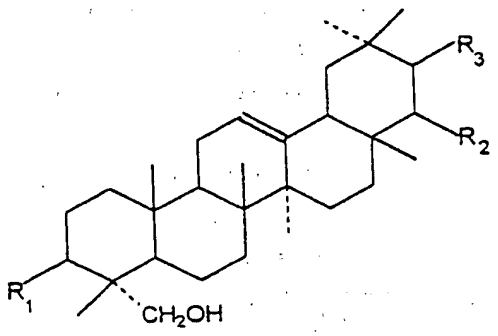
Soya extract, process for its preparation and pharmaceutical composition

Description

The invention relates to novel extracts obtained by extraction of ripe complete soya beans or from oil-free soya flour (Glycine max (L.) MERRIL, Leguminosae family), their production and formulations containing these extracts. The novel extracts are characterized by their content of isoflavones and saponins in defined ratios.

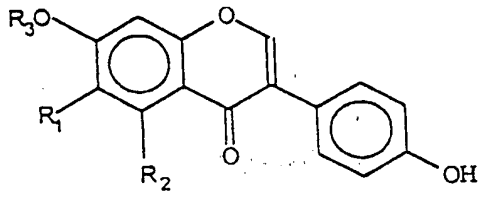
It is known that soya contains saponin and isoflavone components in addition to saccharide and amino acid components, as well as proteins and mineral salts in amounts which depend on their geographical origin and the conditions under which the plant was cultivated and harvested.

The saponin contents have been divided into three classes depending on the chemical structure of their triterpene components: soya saponins of groups A, B and E (Okubo K. et al., ACS Symp., Ser. 546, 330, 1994).



	R_1	R_2	R_3
Group A	Saccharide chain	Saccharide chain	OH
Group B	Saccharide chain	OH	H
Group E	Saccharide chain	-O	H

Isoflavone components consist of glucoside isoflavones (daidzin, genistin and glycitin) which can contain acyl radicals, e.g. malonyl radicals, linked to the saccharide chain.



	R_1	R_2	R_3
Daidzin	H	H	D-Glucose
Glycitin	OCH_3	H	D-Glucose
Genistin	H	OH	D-Glucose
Daizdein	H	H	H
Glycitein	OCH_3	H	H
Genistein	H	OH	H

According to biomedical literature and epidemiological information published in recent years, principally in relation to populations of the East, which consume soya-based foods to a great extent, the use of these foods to a high degree reduces pre-menopausal and post-menopausal symptoms in women (A. Cassidy, Proceedings of the Nutrition Society, 1996, 55, 339-417). These facts, which

still lack a clear scientific basis, are usually ascribed to the isoflavone aglycones genistein, daidzein and glycitein, which are present in the various soya-based foods.

Isoflavones are usually considered to be plant oestrogens, and numerous in-vitro studies have shown that these substances act in a mechanism competing with mammalian oestrogens with an activity which is rated lower by a factor of 500 to 1000 than that of oestradiol (D.A. Shutt and R.I. Cox, Journal of Endocrinology, 1972, 52, 299-310).

According to further biomedical literature and epidemiological information published in recent years, principally relating to population groups in the East, which consume soya-based foods to a great extent, the use of these foods decreases to a high degree breast cancer in women and cancer of the prostate in men (A. Nomura, B.E., Henderson J. Lee, American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, 1978, 31, 2020-2025; T. Hirayama in Diet, Nutrition and Cancer, 1986 pp. 41-53, Y. Hayashi, M. Nagao, T. Sugimura, S. Takayama, L. Tomatis, L.W. Wattenberg and G.N. Wogan eds. Tokyo: Japanese Scientific Society Press; R.K. Severson, A.M.Y. Nomura, J.S. Grove, G.N. Stemmerman, Cancer Research, 1989, 49, 1857-1860). Also, these facts, which still lack a clear scientific basis, are usually ascribed to the isoflavone aglycones genistein, daidzein and glycitein which are present in the various soya-based foods.

These isoflavones have been studied in in-vitro models with regard to their capacity to interact with protein kinases, in particular with tyrosine kinase, enzymes which appear to play a role in proliferation of tumour cells.

Numerous attempts have been made recently to prepare drugs based on soya extracts for the preventive treatment of pre-menopausal and post-menopausal symptoms and also for the preventive treatment of cancer. Some patents or patent applications describe compositions of novel soya extracts obtained by chemical or enzymatic hydrolysis of the glucoside isoflavones present in soya beans or soya bean sprouts (Kikkoman Corp. J-08291191; Kikkoman Corp. J-07173148; Kelly GE WO-9323069; Kikkoman Corp. J-0511707566). All of these publications are concerned solely with the preparation of isoflavones of high concentration and activities with regard to the control of pre-menopausal and post-menopausal disorders and to antitumour activity.

It has now been found, that in contrast to that described previously, extracts which contain glucoside isoflavones **and group B soya saponins in defined ratios are consider-**ably more active than isoflavones alone as regards both, the prevention or treatment of pre-menopausal and post-menopausal symptoms and the prevention or treatment of cancer.

A further aspect related to the extract of the invention is concerned with alcohol abuse and alcohol dependency or alcohol addicition. These are phenomena which can be summarized under the term "alcoholism" and form a serious problem of the entire modern society (Gessa G.L., "Bisogno compulsivo di bere e principio del piacere" [The compulsion to drink and the pleasure principle] in Medicina delle tossicodipendenze [Medicine of drug dependency] II, 5 (1994)). In Italy, **for example, more than 9% of the population (about 5 million) are heavy drinkers and more than 1 million are alcohol-dependent (Calamo-Spechhia F.P., "Epidemiologia dell'alcolismo in Italia" [Epidemiology of alcoholism in**

Italy] in Atti del VII Congresso Nazionale della S.I.A. [Reports of the 7th National Congress of the S.I.A.] Mediserve, Rome, 295-301 (1991)). These numbers are increased when countries such as the USA are taken into account, where more than 13 million are alcohol-dependent. Alcohol abuse and actual alcohol dependency lead to very high public expenditure (since 1991, in the USA about 200 billion dollars per year have been consumed) and are causes of great social and psychological damage to those affected.

Existing attempts to treat alcoholism in addition to those of a psychological nature (group therapy etc.) consist of applying drugs such as disulfiram and calcium carbamide, which act on alcohol metabolism, hepatic aldehyde dehydrogenase being inhibited and therefore the emetic acetaldehyde level being increased, together with all the unwanted phenomena which occur in the course of alcohol intake.

According to the prior art, the only plants whose derivatives were used for treating alcoholism are Pueraria lobata (Radix puerarie) and Salvia miltiorrhiza, which are very widely used in traditional Chinese medicine and form the subject-matter of the Patent Applications WO 93/00896 and WO 96/35441. In addition to the use of the extracts, these patent applications claim the use of pure substances such as daidzein and its semisynthetic derivatives in WO 93/00896, or diterpenoids, such as tanshinone and miltirone in WO 96/35441. An effect on alcohol dehydrogenase with the occurrence of the above-described side effect has been disclosed for the isoflavone derivatives, while the same mechanism has been excluded for the diterpenoid compounds. Furthermore, Patent Application WO 96/36332 disclosed the effect of forskolin in the reduc-

tion of alcohol consumption.

Suprisingly, it has now been found that extracts containing glucoside isoflavones and group B soya saponins in defined ratios can be used with success to reduce deliberate alcohol consumption. These extracts are significantly more effective than the isoflavones alone and act via a mechanism which is different from that of the inhibition of alcohol dehydrogenase, since the plasma alcohol level remains unchanged.

In addition to the above mentioned prior art WO 96/10341 discloses food or health products comprising substantially pure hypocotyls of soya seeds. No reference is made to the extraction procedure and to the ratio between isoflavones and saponins according to the present invention.

US 4,428,876 discloses a process for isolating saponins and flavonoids from leguminous plants. The there disclosed extraction of soybean with 0.4% aqueous sodium hydroxide makes the final extract different from that of the present invention. Again, no reference is made to the ratio between isoflavones and saponins according to the present invention.

JP 59088064 is directed to the isolation and the use of saponins only. The same applies to DE 34 00 258. Similarly JP 61036225 is directed to the isolation and purification of saponins and JP 62005917 to the preparation of pure saponins completely free of isoflavones. JP 4036242 concerns the preparation of pure saponin or of an extract having a high saponin/isoflavone ratio as an antiinflammatory compound.

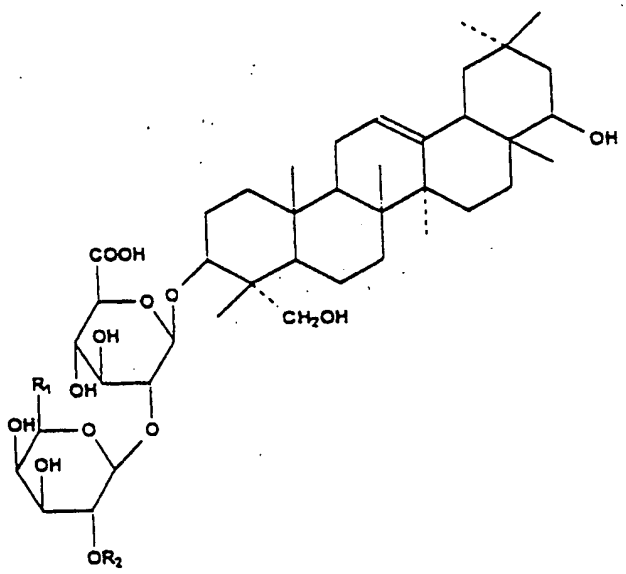
EP-A-426 998 discloses the preparation of isoflavones from soybean and in particular of genistine and daidzine malonate. No reference is made to the extraction of saponins and to the ratio between isoflavones and saponins.

JP 63245648 is directed to the preparation of soybean food material devoid of saponins and isoflavones which are considered harshness components rendering the food unedible.

Mark Messina et al., Journal of the National Cancer Institute, Vol. 83, No. 8, April 17,1991, pages 541-546 is directed to the role of soy products in reducing risk of cancer already reported in scientific literature. Neither this document nor other literature, however, refer to an extract containing saponins and isoflavones in the ratio of this invention, let alone the pharmacological effect obtainable by such a specific extract.

The present invention accordingly relates to an extract which contains 0.6 to 1.5 parts by weight, preferably 1 part by weight,of group B soya saponins per 1 part by weight of glucoside isoflavones, the content of glucoside isoflavones of the extract being at least 13% by weight.

As shown by HPLC-MS analysis, group B soya saponins which have a beneficial effect on the activity of the isoflavone components have the following structures:



	R_1	R_2
Soya saponin V	CH_2OH	Glucose
Soya saponin II isomer	CH_3	Arabinose
Soya saponin I	CH_2OH	Rhamnose
Soya saponin II	H	Rhamnose
Soya saponin III	CH_2OH	H
Soya saponin IV	H	H

The invention further relates to a process for producing the above-defined extract, which is characterized in that it comprises the following stages:

a) the extraction of ripe whole soya beans or oil-free soya flour with aliphatic alcohols or a mixture of these alcohols with water;

b) concentration of the extract from stage a);

c) purification of the concentrated extract of stage b) from oily and lipophilic substances by treatment with aliphatic hydrocarbons;

d) extraction of the active components with water-immiscible aliphatic alcohols;

e) concentration of the extract from stage d) and its drying.

In particular, the extracts according to the invention can be produced by extracting ripe whole soya beans or oil-free soya flour containing group B soya saponins and glucoside isoflavones in the reciprocal ratio of 3:2 to 2:3 with aliphatic alcohols alone or in a mixture with water - preferably with a mixture of ethanol/water, such as 95% pure ethanol. After concentration of the extract and purification of oily and lipophilic substances by treatment with aliphatic hydrocarbons (e.g. n-hexane or n-heptane), the active components are extracted with water-immiscible aliphatic alcohols such as n-butanol, isobutanol and isoamyl alcohol. After concentration to a reduced volume, the organic phase is dried under reduced pressure. The invention further relates to a modification of the above process, in which, after stage b) or c), the concentrated alcohol extract is subjected to the following stage d'), which is followed by stage e):

d') adsorption of the active components to a polystyrene-based adsorption resin; flushing the resin with water; elution of the active constituents with ethanol.

In accordance with this modification, a typical extract of the invention can be produced by adsorption of the active components (isoflavones and saponins), which are present in the concentrated alcohol extract of the plant material, to a polystyrene-based adsorption resin such as duolite or any XAD, in particular XAD1180 owing to its slightly acidic pH; and elution of the mixture of isoflavones and group B soya saponins in turn with ethanol after careful flushing of the resin column with water to remove salts and other inactive components.

The extract obtained under these conditions contains 13 to 17% by weight of isoflavones and 0.6 to 1.5 parts by weight of group B soya saponins, depending on the quality of the plant material used, per 1 part by weight of glucoside isoflavones. This extract also contains a large amount of polyphenolic substances which proved to be essential for the inherent activity of the extract.

An embodiment of the abovementioned process and its modification comprises the following stages:

f) suspending the extract from stage e) in a mixture of a water-miscible alcohol and water and diluting it with a water-immiscible aprotic solvent;

g) heating the mixture from stage f) to complete the dissolution and leaving it at room temperature;

h) collecting the precipitated group B soya saponins by filtration;

i) separating off the organic phase from the water phase; and concentrating the organic phase and drying it to produce the isoflavone components; and

j) mixing the saponins from stage h) and the isoflavones from stage i) in order to form the extract.

Therefore, the extracts according to the invention can preferably, even those which are characterized by a very high content of glucoside isoflavones and group B soya saponins in the above-described ratio, also be produced from the extract obtained in accordance with the above-described process or its modification. For this purpose, the procedure can be followed as follows: the said extract is suspended in a water-miscible alcohol, such as ethanol or methanol, having a water content of 10 to 50%

by volume, and diluted with a water-immiscible aprotic solvent, such as methylene chloride or ethyl acetate. The heterogeneous mixture obtained is heated to complete the dissolution of the extract and left at room temperature, so that the group B soya saponins can precipitate out. The saponins which have a purity of over 90% are collected by filtration. The isoflavone components which have a purity of more than 80% are obtained from the aqueous mother liquor by separating off the organic phase and evaporating and drying the latter. The isoflavones and saponins can then be mixed in order to obtain an extract having a highest possible content of glucoside isoflavones and having a group B soya saponin content of 0.6 to 1.5 parts by weight per 1 part by weight of glucoside isoflavones.

Preferred conditions for carrying out the individual process stages of the process according to the invention are as follows. In this case the units of measurement for parts by volume are l (litres) and those for parts by weight are kg (kilograms).

Stage a: The plant material is preferably extracted with 12 to 17 volumes of solvent per 1 part (weight) of biomass. The extraction temperature is expediently above 55°C. Each extraction is expediently carried out in the course of less than 4 hours. Suitable solvents in addition to ethanol are, inter alia, methanol, propanol and isopropanol. These solvents can contain water up to 10%.

Stage b: The extract is expediently concentrated at a temperature below 50°C under reduced pressure. The extract is expediently concentrated to an alcohol content of 65 to 75%.

Stage c: The purification is expediently performed using 0.3 to 0.6 volumes of aliphatic hydrocarbons per 1 part (by weight) of plant material. A suitable procedure is that of extracting the oily and lipophilic substances.

Stage d: The active compounds are expediently extracted with 0.2 to 0.4 volumes of alcoholic water-immiscible solvent per extraction, calculated on 1 part (by weight) of plant material; preferably, three extractions are carried out.

Stage e: The extract from stage d is expediently concentrated at a temperature below 50°C under reduced pressure.

Stage f: The extract from stage e) is expediently suspended in 5 to 10 volumes (per 1 part of extract) of water-soluble alcohol, using an alcohol/water ratio in the range from 2:8 to 3:7 vol/vol. The aprotic water-immiscible solvent is expediently used in an amount of 2 to 5 volumes, based on 1 part (by weight) of the extract from stage e.

Stage g: To achieve complete dissolution, the mixture is expediently heated and kept under reflux. The mixture is then preferably maintained at room temperature for 15 to 24 h.

Stage i: The organic phase is expediently concentrated by evaporation at a temperature of below 30°C under reduced pressure.

Stage j: Preferably, the saponins from stage h and the glucoside isoflavones from stage g are used to prepare an alcoholic solution which contains the saponins and glucoside isoflavones in a ratio of 1:1, which solution is then expediently concentrated to dryness at a temperature below 50°C under reduced pressure.

The amounts of the isoflavones and the group B soya saponins are determined by HPLC analysis using a Supelcosil LC-ABZ column (250 mm x 4.6 mm), 5 µm, and a ternary elution medium using a gradient, comprising A) H_2O (CF_3COOH 0.01%), B) acetonitrile (CF_3COOH 0.01%) and C)

methyl alcohol (CF_3COOH 0.01%). The individual components can be identified and characterized by mass spectrometry combined with HPLC via a thermospray interface.

The extracts according to the invention are distinguished from previously known extracts with respect to their special action.

With respect to menopause disorders, hot flushes, sleeplessness and depression are the most frequent climacteric symptoms from which women suffer during menopause. They are accompanied by a decrease or cessation in ovarian activity and therefore by decreased oestrogen production and increased production of luteinizing hormone (LH) and follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH).

A recent study (Duker E.M. et al.; Planta. med. 57, 420, 1991) reported an association between an occasional increase in LH and temperature changes in the skin of female rats following an ovariotomy. This relationship between LH level and hot flushes, which has been observed not only in the case of female rats but also with women, suggests that the dose of secreted LH can be considered as a suitable parameter for the study of psychoneurotic/endocrine effects of active endocrine compounds.

Table 1 shows the results which were obtained when ovariectomized female rats were treated with two separate fractions (isoflavones and group B soya saponins) and the extracts according to the invention.

Table 1: Concentration of luteinizing hormone (LH) in the plasma of ovariectomized female rats after oral treatment with soya extracts

Product administered	Dose (mg/kg/day)	LH (ng/ml)
Vehicle	10 ml/kg	6.2 ± 0.01
Group B soya saponins	1,000	5.8 ± 0.02
Soya isoflavones	1,000	3.4 ± 0.001
Soya extract prepared as in Example 1	1,000	2.1 ± 0.001
Soya extract prepared as in Example 3	1,000	1.3 ± 0.001

The female rats were subjected to ovariotomy by known methods. 15 days after the operation the animals were treated with the test substances by single oral administration per day for 15 days. The animals were killed 3 hours after the last treatment. The blood was centrifuged immediately thereafter and the serum obtained was stored at -25°C until determination of LH by radioimmunoassay in accordance with the method described by Niswender et al. (Proc. Soc. Exp. Biol. Med. 128, 807, 1986).

As can be seen, administering the extracts according to the invention led to a statistically significant decrease in LH, which was greater than that obtained for the sum of the individual components (synergistic effect).

The extracts employed in repeated treatments of healthy animals led to no macroscopic or microscopic changes in the organs or systems of male animals, whereas in the female animals they modify the weight of uterus and skeleton, which confirms their oestrogenic activity.

When the extracts according to the invention were

administered to women during menopause - regardless of whether this occurred naturally or was caused surgically - they modified the plasma LH level and reduced menopausal disorders such as hot flushes or depression etc. within a few days of treatment, and also reduced bone demineralization during treatment over longer periods.

The extracts according to the invention also have marked anitproliferative activity. Table 2 shows the antiproliferative activity towards on ovarian tumour cell line (OVCA 433).

Table 2: Antiproliferative activity of soya extracts towards an ovarian tumour cell line (OVCA 433) in vitro.

Compound	IC_{50} μM
Group B soya saponins	6.2
Soya isoflavones	4.5
Soya extract prepared as in Example 1	1.6
Soya extract prepared as in Example 3	1.1

The cells were cultured in a monolayer culture on a minimum of essential medium containing added calf serum and 200 units/ml of penicillin to keep the medium sterile. For reproducibility of the tests, the cells were trypsinized each week and applied to plates at a density of 8×10^4 cells/ml and incubated at 37°C under an air atmosphere at a content of 5% CO_2 and moisture. To assay the activity of the compounds, the cells were placed in wells (Falcon 3046, Becton Dickinson NY) at a concentration of 1×10^5/ml in a mimimal amount of substrate. After 24 h, the substrate was replaced by fresh substrate

and the compounds dissolved in absolute ethanol were added. Controls were treated similarly with the excipient in the absence of the active compound to be tested. The above described treatment was repeated at intervals of 24 hours for a test period of 72 h. The inhibition of cell proliferation was assessed by direct enumeration of the cells, with the growth of the controls being compared to that of the "treated" test. As shown, the extracts according to the invention possessed an antiproliferative activity which is greater than the sum of the antiproliferative activity of their components (synergistic activity). The compounds according to the invention inhibited cell proliferation in vivo, as verified by measuring the size of tumours transplanted into naked athymic mice in accordance with the usual conditions reported in the literature. Treating the animals with doses in the range from 10 to 500 mg/kg led to a marked degeneration of the tumours studied, up to their disappearance in a high percentage of the individuals.

As regards the inhibitory effect on alcohol consumption, this effect was determined using alcohol-consuming rats of the species "Sardinian alcohol-preferring" (Sp) (Fadda F., Mosca E., Colombo G., Gessa G.L., Alcohol preferring rats; Genetic sensitivity to alcohol-induced stimulation of dopamine metabolism, in Physiol. Behav. 47, 727 (1990)). These animals which, with a free choice between alcohol and water, consume 6 to 7 g of alcohol daily per kg of bodyweight (at a water to alcohol ratio of greater than 2:1) have successfully been used in recent years to determine the effect of various substances on voluntary alcohol consumption, see, for example, Balakleevsky A., Colombo G., Fadda F., Gessa G.L., Ro 19-4603, a benzodiazepine receptor inverse agonist, attenuates voluntary ethanol consumption in rats selectively bred for high ethanol preference, in Alcohol Alcohol 25, 449-452

(1990); Fadda F., Garau B., Colombo G., Gessa G.L., Isradipine and other calcium channel antagonists attenuate ethanol consumption in ethanol-preferring rats, in Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research 16 (3), 449-452 (1992).

The animals which were kept under normal conditions of accommodation could freely select between water (which was always present) and alcohol (a 10% strength solution vol/vol) which was offered during a period of 4 h per day (i.e. the first four hours of darkness during the day/night cycle). The amounts of water and alcohol consumed were recorded for each day at the same time. Food was offered ad libitum. After a stable alcohol and water consumption was achieved, the extract, at a dose of 1000 mg/kg suspended in water, was administered orally in a volumetric amount of 2 ml/kg once per day for 7 successive days. As a control, an identical volume of excipient was used. At the end of the treatment, the alcohol consumption was recorded until the values before the treatment were achieved.

Table 3 shows the effect of repeated oral administration of 1000 mg/kg of soya extract on the alcohol consumption.

Table 3 - Effect of the repeated oral administration of soya extracts on alcohol consumption in Sp (Sardinian alcohol-preferring)

Compound	Dose (mg/kg)	Alcohol consumption (g/kg)									
		Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10
Vehicle	2 ml/kg	2.9 ± 0.1	2.9 ± 0.2	2.8 ± 0.3	2.9 ± 0.2	2.6 ± 0.2	3.0 ± 0.1	2.9 ± 0.3	2.9 ± 0.1	2.8 ± 0.2	2.6 ± 0.2
Group B soya saponins	1000	2.8 ± 0.1	2.8 ± 0.3	2.9 ± 0.2	2.7 ± 0.3	2.2*± 0.1	2.2*± 0.1	2.6 ± 0.2	2.7 ± 0.2	2.9 ± 0.1	3.0 ± 0.2
Soya isoflavones	1000	2.6 ± 0.2	2.9 ± 0.2	2.8 ± 0.1	2.9 ± 0.3	1.9*± 0.2	1.9*± 0.2	2.0*± 0.1	1.9*± 0.1	2.3 ± 0.2	2.6 ± 0.3
Soya extract, produced in accordance with Example 1	1000	3.0 ± 0.2	2.9 ± 0.1	2.9 ± 0.3	2.0*± 0.1	1.8*± 0.1	1.6**± 0.1	1.4**± 0.2	1.5**± 0.1	2.0 ± 0.2	2.4 ± 0.3
Soya extract, produced in accordance with Example 3	1000	2.8 ± 0.2	2.9 ± 0.3	3.0 ± 0.3	2.1*± 0.1	1.6**± 0.1	1.7**± 0.1	1.2**± 0.2	1.2**± 0.1	1.9*± 0.2	2.2 ± 0.3

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01;
Dunnet's t-test for a multiple comparison versus vehicle-treated animal.

Table 3 leads to the conclusion that soya extract significantly decreases the alcohol consumption. The reduction in alcohol consumption remains constant during the 7 treatment days and then decreases after the end of treatment. Furthermore, it can be seen that the reduction in alcohol consumption is greater than that which is given by the sum of the effects of the individual components (synergistic effect).

The invention therefore also relates to a pharmaceutical composition which contains the above-defined extract as active component. In particular, the invention relates to a pharmaceutical composition containing this extract for the prevention or the treatment of pre-menopausal and post-menopausal symptoms, to a pharmaceutical composition containing this extract for the prevention and treatment of breast cancer in women and of prostate cancer in men and to a pharmaceutical composition containing this extract for the prevention or treatment of alcoholism.

The products or extracts according to the invention can be formulated in a suitable manner in tablets, soft or hard gelatine capsules, granular powders for preparing ready-to-use solutions or fluids or liquids which are compatible with their solubility. The doses of the extract according to the invention are in the range from 30 mg to 500 mg in the case of single or repeated administration per day, preferably 200 mg with administration twice per day. The oral form is the expedient form of administration.

The following examples illustrate the invention.

Example 1 - Production of soya extract having an isoflavone content of 15% by weight and a ratio of glucoside isoflavones/group B soya saponins of 1:1.5 by purification with solvents

10 kg of oil-freed soya flour containing 0.2% of glucoside isoflavones and 0.3% of group B soya saponins are refluxed five times with 30 l of 95% strength ethyl alcohol. The alcohol extracts are mixed and concentrated under reduced pressure to 5 l. The concentrate is diluted with 1.5 l of water and extracted four times with 5 l of n-hexane. The hexane phase is discarded and the concentrated alcohol phase is extracted four times using 2.5 l of n-butanol. The organic phase is concentrated and dried under reduced pressure. 133 g of extract having an isoflavone content of 15% by weight and a group B soya saponin content of 22.5% by weight are obtained.

An HPLC diagram of an extract obtained by the process of this example is shown in Figure 1.

Example 2 - Production of a soya extract having an isoflavone content of 15% by weight and a ratio of glucoside isoflavones/group B soya saponins of 1:1.5 by purification on polystyrene resin

The aqueous concentrate produced in Example 1 is not extracted with n-butanol, but treated with polyethoxylated castor oil (Cremophor®), to dissolve the resinous residues from the concentration of the alcohol phase. It is then applied, suspended in purified water (5 l), to a column of XAD1180 resin. The column is then flushed with water for complete removal of salts, sugars and surface-active agents and then eluted with about 10 l of 95% strength ethyl alcohol. After concentrating and drying the ethanol eluate, 130 g of extract having the same composition as that of the extract obtained in Example 1 are obtained.

Example 3 - Production of a soya extract having an isoflavone content of 43% by weight and a ratio of glucoside isoflavones/group B soya saponins of 1:1

200 g of the extract obtained in Example 1 or 2 are suspended in 1 l of aqueous 20% strength ethyl alcohol and diluted with 0.5 l of ethyl acetate. The suspension is subjected to a countercurrent heating with vigorous stirring until complete dissolution and then left for the course of one night. The saponins precipitated out (38 g, purity 93%) are isolated by filtration and the ethyl-acetate- and water-containing aqueous mother liquor is separated off. The organic phase is concentrated under reduced pressure and dried. The isoflavone residue - 37 g having a purity of 81% - is dissolved in 1 l of ethyl alcohol and admixed with 32 g of crystallized saponins, in order to obtain a product which contains isoflavones and saponins in a weight ratio of 1:1. The alcoholic solution is concentrated to dryness under reduced pressure and gives 69 g of extract having a content of 43% by weight of glucoside isoflavones and 43% by weight of group B soya saponins.

Example 4 - Production of hard gelatine capsules containing soya extract

Soya extract produced in accordance with Example 1	200.0 mg
Lactose	67.5 mg
Microcrystalline cellulose	22.5 mg
Colloidal silicon dioxide	3.0 mg
Croscarmellose sodium (crosslinked polymer of carboxymethylcellulose sodium)	21.0 mg
Talc	8.0 mg
Magnesium stearate	3.0 mg

Example 5 - Production of tablets containing soya extract

Soya extract, produced in accordance with Example 3	400.0 mg
Soya polysaccharides	155.5 mg
Microcrystalline cellulose	57.0 mg
Hydroxypropylmethylcellulose	12.0 mg
Hydrogenated vegetable oil	19.5 mg
Colloidal silicon dioxide	3.0 mg
Magnesium stearate	3.0 mg

Patent claims

1. Soya extract, characterized by a content of 0.6 to 1.5 parts by weight of group B soya saponins per 1 part by weight of glucoside isoflavones, the content of glucoside isoflavones of the extract being at least 13% by weight.

2. Soya extract according to Claim 1, characterized by a content of 1 part by weight of group B soya saponins per 1 part by weight of glucoside isoflavones.

3. Process for producing an extract according to Claim 1 or 2, characterized in that it comprises the following stages:

a) the extraction of ripe whole soya beans or oil-free soya flour with aliphatic alcohols or a mixture of these alcohols with water;

b) concentration of the extract from stage a);

c) purification of the concentrated extract of stage b) from oily and lipophilic substances by treatment with aliphatic hydrocarbons;

d) extraction of the active components with water-immiscible aliphatic alcohols;

e) concentration of the extract from stage d) and its drying.

4. Modification of the process according to Claim 3, in which, after stage b) or stage c), the concentrated alcohol extract is subjected to the following stage d'), which is followed by stage e):

d') adsorption of the active components to a polystyrene-based adsorption resin; flushing the resin with water; elution of the active constituents with ethanol.

5. Process according to Claim 3 or 4, comprising the following additional stages:

f) suspending the extract from stage e) in a mixture of a water-miscible alcohol and water and diluting it with a water-immiscible aprotic solvent;

g) heating the mixture from stage f) to complete the dissolution and leaving it at room temperature;

h) collecting the precipitated group B soya saponins by filtration;

i) separating off the organic phase from the water phase; and concentrating the organic phase and drying it to produce the isoflavone components; and

j) mixing the saponins from stage h) and the isoflavones from stage i) in order to form the extract.

6. Pharmaceutical composition containing, as active component, an extract according to Claim 1 or 2.

7. Pharmaceutical composition according to Claim 6 for the prevention or treatment of pre-menopausal and post-menopausal symptoms.

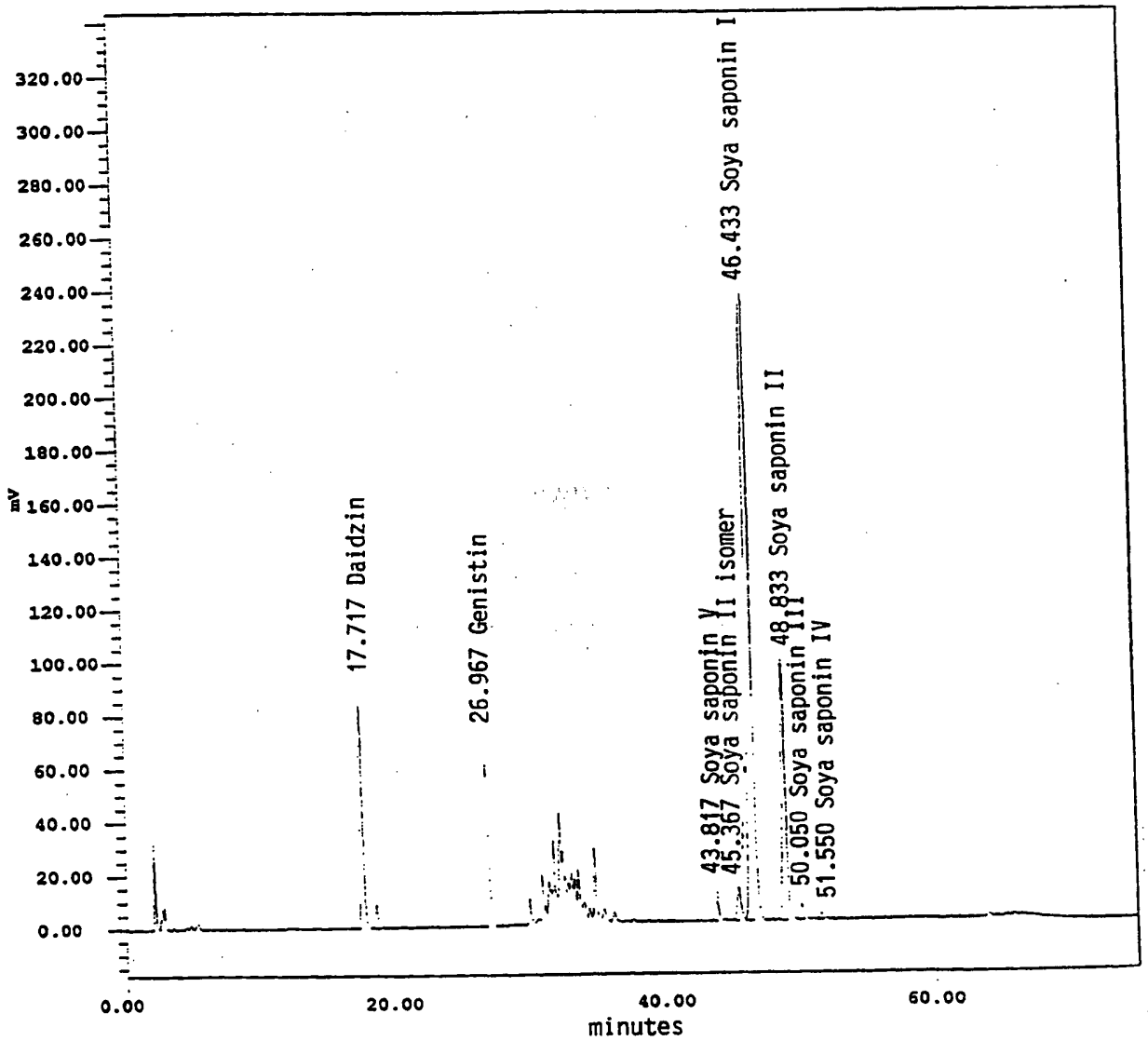
8. Pharmaceutical composition according to claim 6 for the prevention or treatment of cancer.

9. Pharmaceutical composition according to claim 6 or 8 for the prevention or treatment of breast cancer in women.

10. Pharmaceutical composition according to claim 6 or 8 for the prevention or treatment of prostate cancer in men.

11. Pharmaceutical composition according to claim 6 for the prevention or treatment of alcoholism.

Figure1



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Int. ional Application No
PCT/EP 98/04770

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC 6 A61K35/78

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
IPC 6 A61K

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category °	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN vol. 013, no. 049 (C-565), 3 February 1989 & JP 63 245648 A (AJINOMOTO CO INC;OTHERS: 01), 12 October 1988 cited in the application see abstract ---	1-3
X	PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN vol. 010, no. 194 (C-358), 8 July 1986 & JP 61 036225 A (AIRIN:KK), 20 February 1986 cited in the application see abstract --- -/--	3,4

[X] Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

[X] Patent family members are listed in annex.

° Special categories of cited documents :

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

"E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date

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"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

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Date of the actual completion of the international search	Date of mailing of the international search report
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Name and mailing address of the ISA	Authorized officer
European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl, Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016	Rempp, G

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Inte .onal Application No
PCT/EP 98/04770

C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

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